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FAIRY CHILDREN.

The superstitious belief which still prevails to a great extent in Ireland, with regard to fairy children, or *changelings* as they are called, is of very injurious tendency, and will, we trust, ere long, be extirpated. The entertaining historian of fairy lore, Mr. Crofton Croker, says—"When a child appears delicate, or a young woman consumptive, the conclusion is, that they are carried off to be made a playmate or nurse to the young fairies, and that a substitute, resembling the person taken away, is deposited in their place, which gradually declines, and ultimately dies. The inhuman means used by ignorant parents to discover if an unhealthy child be their offspring or a changeling, (the name given to the illusory image,) is, placing the child, undressed, on the road side, where it is suffered to lie a considerable time exposed to cold. After such ceremony, they conclude a natural disorder has caused the symptoms of decay; and the child is then treated with more tenderness, from an idea, that had it been possessed by a fairy, that spirit would not have brooked such indignity, but made its escape. Paralytic affections are attributed to the same agency, whence the term 'fairy-struck;' and the same cruel treatment is observed towards aged persons thus affected."

The following very pleasing ballad, by our talented countryman, Dr. Anster, has been founded on this superstition; the mother is supposed to speak—

"The summer sun was sinking
With a mild light, calm and mellow,
It shone on my little boy's bonny cheeks,
And his loose locks of yellow.

The robin was singing sweetly,
And his song was sad and tender;
And my little boy's eyes as he heard the song,
Smiled with sweet soft splendour.

My little boy lay on my bosom,
While his soul the song was quaffing;
The joy of his soul had ting'd his cheek,
And his heart and his eye were laughing.

I sat alone in my cottage,
The midnight needle plying;
I fear'd for my child, for the rush's light
In the socket now was dying.

There came a hand to my lonely latch,
Like the wind at midnight moaning,
I knelt to pray—but rose again—
For I heard my little boy groaning!

I crossed my brow, and I crossed my breast,
But that night my child departed!
They left a weakling in his stead,
And I am broken-hearted!

Oh! it cannot be my own sweet boy,
For his eyes are dim and hollow,
My little boy is gone to God,
And his mother soon will follow.

The dirge for the dead will be sung for me,
And the mass be chaunted sweetly;
And I will sleep with my little boy,
In the moonlight church-yard meetly."

ANTIQUITY OF SMOKING IN IRELAND.—The custom of smoking is of much greater antiquity in Ireland than the introduction of tobacco into Europe. Smoking pipes made of bronze are frequently found in our Irish *tumuli*, or sepulchral mounds of the most remote antiquity, and similar pipes made of baked clay are discovered daily in all parts of the island. A curious instance of the bathos in sculpture, which also illustrates the antiquity of this custom, occurs on the monument of Donogh O'Brien, king of Thomond, who was killed in 1267, and interred in the abbey of Corcumroe, in the county of Clare, of which his family were the founders. He is represented in the usual recumbent posture, with the short pipe or *dudeen* of the Irish in his mouth! P.

FINE ARTS.

No. 4.

Historic Sketch of the past and present state of the Fine Arts in Ireland.

(Continued from page 140.)

In the last number of our historical sketch of the past and present state of the Fine Arts in Ireland, page 147, we brought our subject down to the introduction of the pointed, or, as it is popularly called, the Gothic style of Architecture in the twelfth century. Of this beautiful style, we have yet remaining several fine examples, as at Kilkenny, Cashel, Kilmallock, Ierpoint, Holy Cross, Adair, &c.; but the best of them are poor and meagre in comparison with many of the cathedral and abbey churches of England and Scotland. The "flying buttress," one of the most fanciful and striking features of the style, is only, we believe, to be seen in our Metropolitan cathedral-church of St. Patrick. While our comparatively happy sister islands were advancing progressively towards refinement, it was the fate of Ireland to be retrograding into more than her ancient barbarism. If the English, as they "waxed Irish," lost much of their civility, the "mere Irish," gained as little by becoming harrassed and unprotected subjects of the British crown. Misrule and civil war debased and demoralized the island from one extremity to the other; and the Fine Arts appear to have been reduced to a lower ebb, even than they had been by the Danish conquests. The ecclesiastical structures of the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries, present a melancholy, but interesting commentary on the history of those times. The edifices of each age are more and more barbarous than those of the time preceding; and previous to the reign of Elizabeth, the Fine Arts might be said to have been almost wholly exiled from the country.

The preceding observations have had reference chiefly to the progress of architecture in our island, but they will apply equally to the fate of the sister arts. The churches of the thirteenth century were frequently adorned with statues, but the Iconoclastic rage of the reformers has saved us the trouble of speaking on their merits, for it left us only the empty niches in which they had been placed. Not a single statue of those times has survived! We can only judge, therefore, of the sculptors' abilities by monumental effigies, which, as we have already remarked, were introduced into Ireland at the close of the twelfth century. These are chiefly figures of mitred ecclesiastics, or mailed warriors, presenting but little variety in their attitudes or costumes; yet, though generally rude and ungraceful efforts of art, they have often an Egyptian simplicity, and a boldness of relief, not unappropriate to works of their kind, and possibly superior in these respects to the more laboured productions of more recent times.

We have still fewer vestiges left us of the art of Painting. Some remains of frescoes of the fourteenth century, are still to be seen in three or four of our Abbeys, of which those at Knockmoy, in the County of Galway, are the most remarkable; for, though they are rude in design, and faded in colour, they are inestimably interesting to the antiquary as the most authentic memorials of ancient Irish costumes now to be found. An engraving of these paintings has been given by Ledwich in his *Antiquities of Ireland*, and that learned man, but most unskilful antiquary, ventures an opinion that they were the work of the confederate catholics of the seventeenth century, and consequently of no authority! This opinion hardly deserves refutation, for the inscriptions on the wall, though they show that the paintings are not of the time of Cathal O'Connor, prove them incontrovertibly to belong to the thirteenth or fourteenth century. As the engraving alluded to has no claim to accuracy, we shall present our readers with faithful representations of those interesting remains, and claim their indulgence to interrupt the course of our little history, while we endeavour to illustrate them.

These paintings are found on the north side of the chancel of the Abbey, which being vaulted with stone, has hitherto